

Colloquī

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A journal for restless minds

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Colloquī is a Deacon's Corner weekly journal. Its mission and purpose: to encourage serious discussion, to promote reasoned debate, and to provide serious content for those who hope to find their own pathway to God.

Each week Colloquī will contain articles on theology, philosophy, faith, religion, Catholicism, and much more.

Be forewarned! Articles may and often will contain fuel for controversy, but always with the express intent to seek the Truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help us God.

The Great Divide

Faith you can believe in

Where then has the mind turned when doctrine and dogma are found to be of no accord? Upon whose authority does the mind rely for reason, for truth, for knowledge, for understanding, for orthodoxy? These then are the stuff of legend now deemed anathema to the sentient horde, the mindless mob alive only in as much as they have the capacity to subjectively feel, perceive or experience a reality, a truth of an existence they have conjured for themselves.

Modern Western philosophers say of sentience: it is merely the ability to experience sensations, which fits quite nicely with those who claim severe distress over the sensitivities of the dung beetle

or the hurt feelings of caged fowl. What is unclear is where those self-same progressive purveyors of feelings for the lowest of sentient lifeforms inexplicably lose their feigned righteousness when it comes to gratuitously rending—ripping and tearing apart—an unborn human being into salvageable body parts.

It is this faux-sentience upon which disciples of progressivism lay their claim to the moral high-ground.

Here then we must pause and digress a little for the key to understanding is to first “know” a thing or two about what one is talking about rather than simply

bloviating tripe and nonsense. This should be obvious but obviously a goodly number have yet to get the message. Whether their ignorance is accidental or intentional is a truly terrifying thought.



CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Eighteenth-century philosophers distinguished **sentience**—the ability to subjectively feel, perceive and experience something—from **sapience**—the ability to think, to reason and to act using knowledge, experience, understanding, common sense and insight. **Homo Sapiens**, which means *wise man* — undoubtedly an arguable characterization for those who either by the grace of God or self-imposed ignorance are lacking in either wisdom or knowledge — is a uniquely rational being, endowed with a mind and the capacity to reason, to think, understand and form judgments by a process of logic. No other creature has been so endowed; many species are to varying degrees sentient, but only one is both sentient and sapient: man.

It is perhaps the gravest misfortune of modern man to live in a time of significant technological breakthroughs, of so-called “progress.” As Joseph Pearce recently observed:

We believe that humanity is progressing because technology is progressing. We see the all-pervasive evidence of technological progress and believe that this is synonymous with the progress of humanity. This is curious in itself. Apart from the technological breakthroughs which can be seen as being beneficial, should we consider the guillotine, nerve gas and the nuclear bomb to be “progressive”? The guillotine facilitated the Great Terror following the French Revolution, enabling the modern world’s first secular fundamentalist state to terrorize its own citizens; poison gas in World War One choked the last vestiges of chivalry from the act of warfare; and the nuclear bomb still hangs

like the Sword of Damocles, a portent of doom, over our increasingly and arrogantly myopic culture.

The past century has seen humanity turn its back on religion in the name of a so-called “progress” that, in reality, has been a frenzy of murderous debauchery. More people have been killed by “progressive” creeds like communism and Nazism in the past century than were ever killed in the so-called religious wars of the past. In the world before religion was banished by the new godless creeds of secularism, there were no labor camps, no concentration camps, no gas chambers, no blitzkrieg, no Hiroshimas or Nagasakis. And yet the new atheists, proclaiming the creed of “progress,” have the sheer temerity and audacity to claim that religion and not sin causes war and bloodshed! And as for our own culture, it is considered “progressive” to legalize the killing of babies in the womb. If this is progress in any meaningful sense, it is progress toward the abyss.¹

G. K. Chesterton, in his marvelous book, *Heretics*, offers some truly salient remarks on the importance of orthodoxy, a term widely dismissed as describing someone who maintains a rigid, mindless, unyielding adherence to ritual or doctrine.

Such a view shows the unquestioned ignorance of those who could espouse such a nonsensical position, for the word orthodoxy describes any authorized or generally accepted theory, doctrine, or practice; thus Einstein’s General Theory of Relativity—orthodoxy, physicians devoted to the practice of medicine—orthodoxy, athletes practicing their sport—orthodoxy, the list is endless.

Chesterton asks whether the modern notion of mental progress is reasonable or simply a progressive pipedream. To be clear, Chesterton believed that “progress” was not merely a problem but “the mother of problems.”

Whether the human mind can advance or not, is a question too little discussed, for nothing can be more dangerous than to found our social philosophy on any theory which is debatable but has not been debated. But if we assume, for the sake of argument, that there has been in the past, or will be in the future, such a thing as a growth or improvement of the human mind itself, there still remains a very sharp objection to be raised against the modern version of that improvement. The vice of the modern notion of mental progress is that it is always something concerned with the breaking of bonds, the effacing of boundaries, the casting away of dogmas. But if there be such a thing as mental growth, it must mean the growth into more and more definite convictions, into more and more dogmas. The human brain is a machine for coming to conclusions; if it cannot come to conclusions it is rusty. ... Man can be defined as an animal that makes dogmas. As he piles doctrine on doctrine and conclusion on conclusion in the formation of some tremendous scheme of philosophy and religion, he is, in the only legitimate sense of which the expression is capable, becoming more and more human. When he drops one doctrine after another in a refined scepticism, when he declines to tie himself to a system, when he says that he has outgrown definitions, when he says that he disbelieves in finality, when, in his own imagination, he sits as God, holding no form of creed but contemplating all, then he is by that very process

sinking slowly backwards into the vagueness of the vagrant animals and the unconsciousness of the grass. Trees have no dogmas. Turnips are singularly broad-minded.

If then, I repeat, there is to be mental advance, it must be mental advance in the construction of a definite philosophy of life. And that philosophy of life must be right and the other philosophies wrong.²

Chesterton, in his own inimical style, pointedly addresses the hypocrisy and disingenuousness of progressivism and its disciples. Progressives while demanding freedom from doctrine and dogma in the holy name of “progress” are incapable—or so it appears from all available evidence—of recognizing the doctrinal chains and dogmatic strictures which have choked off blood flow to the brain resulting in severe mental regression; in their naivete or culpable ignorance they conclude the correctness of their position; clearly everyone else is either misguided or mentally incapable of knowing their truth; what is unclear to the rusty brain: failure to recognize the doctrine and dogma they themselves adhere. At the very least, the progressive is heterodox, refusing to conform to accepted or orthodox standards or beliefs.

Doctrine is nothing more than a belief or set of beliefs held and taught by a church, political party or any other group; it is merely a stated or written principle of policy. Dogma is doctrine which bears the added burden of authoritative truth, that is, it is a principle or set of principles laid down by an authority as incontrovertibly true.

One of the main reasons that progress is the mother of problems is that it is no longer a means to an end but has become an end in itself. Progress is a law unto itself, and to question progress is not only to question the good that progress is presumed to be but to question the god that progress has become. According to this dogmatic progressivism, any attack on progress is not only wrong but futile. Progress is unstoppable; it is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. It has all the attributes of the divine. It is inexorable, indestructible, and of course benign. It is not only an all-powerful god, but a good god.

At this juncture, we should confess that the god of progress is much more mysterious than the God of the Christians. As a blind mechanical force, it has no personality, yet it guides everything with a mystically benign hand. It has no will but its will is always done.

Enough of such nonsense! This sort of “progress” does not really exist; it is nothing but the superstitious fantasy of “progressives.” It is the mother of deception as its spouse is the father of lies. Let’s return to Chesterton for a healthy dose of sanity. “Progress,” wrote Chesterton, “is a useless word; for progress takes for granted an already defined direction: and it is exactly about the direction that we disagree.” As usual, Chesterton cuts through the cant and cuts to the chase. Since progress is the means by which an end is achieved we cannot meaningfully talk about progress until we have decided upon the end towards which we wish to progress. Thereafter progress must be judged in relation to the end it serves. Against this vision of progress, Chesterton laments the fatalistic determinism of the “progressive” thinker whose vision of progress is amorphously goalless: “The typical modern man ... has no positive picture at all of

what he is aiming at, but only a vague (and erroneous) sensation of progress.” It is to this typical modern man that Barack Obama was appealing when he reiterated *ad nauseam* the mantra of “change” during his successful election campaigns. A populace bewitched by the god of progress will always be seduced by the magical charm of “change” because the progressive god promises that “change” is always for the better. The irony inherent in these calls for “change” is that they play on the discontentment of those who are the beneficiaries of centuries of “change.” If “change” is beneficially progressive why are we always discontented regardless of the numerous “changes” that we have experienced?³

Chesterton had a great deal to say concerning “progress” and I would be remiss if I failed to encourage everyone who is in the least bit discomfited with the current madness to indulge in, at a minimum, three of his books: *Heretics*, *Orthodoxy*, and *What’s Wrong with the World*. There are more, to be sure, but those three will go a long distance toward understanding the method and the madness that pervades and threatens to overcome us. One final note from Chesterton on “Progress”:

The case of the general talk of “progress” is, indeed, an extreme one. As enunciated today, “progress” is simply a comparative of which we have not settled the superlative. We meet every ideal of religion, patriotism, beauty, or brute pleasure with the alternative ideal of progress — that is to say, we meet every proposal of getting something that we know about, with an alternative proposal of getting a great deal more of nobody knows what. Progress, properly

understood, has, indeed, a most dignified and legitimate meaning. But as used in opposition to precise moral ideals, it is ludicrous. So far from it being the truth that the ideal of progress is to be set against that of ethical or religious finality, the reverse is the truth. Nobody has any business to use the word "progress" unless he has a definite creed and a cast-iron code of morals. **Nobody can be progressive without being doctrinal** (*emphasis mine*); I might almost say that nobody can be progressive without being infallible — at any rate, without believing in some infallibility. For progress by its very name indicates a direction; and the moment we are in the least doubtful about the direction, we become in the same degree doubtful about the progress. Never perhaps since the beginning of the world has there been an age that had less right to use the word "progress" than we. In the Catholic twelfth century, in the philosophic eighteenth century, the direction may have been a good or a bad one, men may have differed more or less about how far they went, and in what direction, but about the direction they did in the main agree, and consequently they had the genuine sensation of progress. But it is precisely about the direction that we disagree. Whether the future excellence lies in more law or less law, in more liberty or less liberty; whether property will be finally concentrated or finally cut up; whether sexual passion will reach its sanest in an almost virgin intellectualism or in a full animal freedom; whether we should love everybody with Tolstoy, or spare nobody with Nietzsche; — these are the things about which we are actually fighting most. It is not merely true that the age which has settled least what is progress is this "progressive" age. It is, moreover, true that the people who have settled least what is progress are the

most "progressive" people in it. The ordinary mass, the men who have never troubled about progress, might be trusted perhaps to progress. The particular individuals who talk about progress would certainly fly to the four winds of heaven when the pistol-shot started the race. **I do not, therefore, say that the word "progress" is unmeaning; I say it is unmeaning without the previous definition of a moral doctrine, and that it can only be applied to groups of persons who hold that doctrine in common.** (*emphasis mine*) Progress is not an illegitimate word, but it is logically evident that it is illegitimate for us. It is a sacred word, a word which could only rightly be used by rigid believers and in the ages of faith.⁴

Progressivism is a mind-killer, as deadly to the spirit as sweets to a diabetic; utopian promises of progress and change entice the gullible like heroin to an addict or a bottle to an alcoholic. The god of progress will have no other gods before it; it is a jealous god, demanding total obeisance, brooking no dissent. Disciples are legion, even among those who call themselves Christian and "practicing" Catholics. Just as our first parents fell for the false promise to be as gods, so also do "practicing" Catholics fall for the utopian lies of Progressivism, drinking the Kool-Aid of false promises. As Pearce makes abundantly clear, "Progress is a law unto itself, and to question progress is not only to question the good that progress is presumed to be but to question the god that progress has become." Like the Borg, "resistance is futile."

A guest contributor to the eMagazine Patheos:Catholic exemplifies the pervasive evil of Progressivism not only in secular society but throughout

religious institutions worldwide, most notably the Roman Catholic Church.

The writer, H. Lillian Vogl, describes herself as a writer, farmer, freelance academic, and Christian rebel. She follows that with this bit of heterodoxy which provides a clue as to just how much of the progressive Kool-Aid she has thus far imbibed:

I'm interested in eco-growing and sustainable economies, a theology of the real female body, social justice, and poking at the patriarchy. I write poems about insects and other things that some find disgusting, and novels that are likely to be banned in certain quarters.

What is "eco-growing"? "Eco—" in normal usage represents "ecology" which begs the question: how does one go about growing ecology; is it animal, vegetable or mineral? As for "sustainable economies," the head spins with progressive utopian visions of tiny self-sustaining egalitarian matriarchal communities—sans modern touches: mud huts or caves anyone?—populated solely by "real" female bodies (as opposed to fake ones, I suppose) who wile away bucolic days writing odes to ants and spiders, flies and mosquitos, dung beetles and other sacred pests (disgusting male bodies having been condemned to death for the sin of being male.)

This then provides context for the contribution from H. Lillian Vogl. Nominally a "practicing Catholic," her opening remarks prepare the reader for the decidedly progressive cant contained in what follows.

I've been noticing lately that there are two deeply different belief systems found among people who call themselves "practicing Catholic." I'm going to avoid typical labels with all their baggage and call the two groups "Open Catholics" and "Roman Exclusionists." (At first I thought to use the term "exclusionary Catholics," but that would be far too oxymoronic, given that "catholic" means universal.) There isn't a single litmus test of belief, practice, or state of life between these two groups, but rather a pervasive difference in faith and worldview, which I intend to tease out.

To be unambiguously blunt, Vogl's open is vague, confusing, and heretical. There is a common propensity among progressives to which she fully embraces of ascribing her views to include a much larger coterie of like-minded individuals. She generalizes—"I've been noticing lately"—without substantiating her plaint—"that there are two deeply different belief systems found among people who call themselves 'practicing Catholic.'" Would she have been honest she would have admitted that "I've been noticing lately that what I believe is deeply different from the teaching of the Catholic Church, and furthermore, do not believe I am alone in my dissent." Her prejudicial open clearly evokes division within the broader communion of Catholics and undeservedly inflates her individual views beyond what she can possibly substantiate or validate.

Vogl then proceeds to avoid labels by creating two new labels, how devilishly clever! Her reason: "to avoid typical labels with all their baggage" is so

vague as to be meaningless. What is a typical label? What baggage? As the sole arbiter of "meaningful" labels, she declares the Catholic Church divided into "Open Catholics" and "Roman Exclusionists" without further explanation. How generous! I cannot help but equate "Open Catholics" to the "Open Marriage" movement, first publicized back in 1972, which espoused that a couple could call themselves married but live as if they were not. In other words, forget the rules, the reason and the sacred purpose of marriage, anything goes.

Under the heading "Incarnational vs. Incantational" Vogl writes:

The most important thing to know about the faith of Open Catholics is that the Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us. God went so far as take on human flesh and suffer every indignity that the fallen human race has ever dished out, because He desired so deeply to have a personal, loving relationship with each human person. Our bodies are good, this world He made is meant to be enjoyed, and God is not offended by our informality with Him but hurt by our holding Him at a distance. We draw closer to Him in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, but also in heartfelt prayer, in dialog with other believers and non-believers about what is good and evil in this world, in appreciating and collaborating in the infinite diversity of His creation, and in what we do for the least of these. All of these modes of drawing closer to the Incarnate God are essential to our Catholic faith. The Particular practices, on the other hand, from

saying the rosary to knowing precisely what the Catechism has to say about these topics, are beneficial but ultimately optional. Non-Catholics can draw closer to God by many of these means (other than the Eucharist), and thus it is not strange to find some are closer to God than some Catholics who have the Eucharist. We believe we're all on the same journey, but Open Catholics are in communion with the Catholic Church because we believe it can give us a better roadmap and sustenance along the way.

Theologically and scripturally, Vogl is clearly drowning under the weight of her own ignorance, sinking fast and dragging as many as she can with her. Her argument contorts and distorts what is found in Scripture to conform to her "belief system"; applying a progressive saccharine cant so to seduce the unwary to take a bite of her apple, while arguing that "Open Catholics" are, well, open to believing whatever they want to believe; what they find difficult to believe is "ultimately optional." Her Catholicism is centered on what she believes, not on what her Catholic faith demands or what the Catholic Church teaches. Implied, but not explicitly stated, is that so long as the Catholic Church provides a better roadmap (than what?) and better food for the journey she will remain in "communion." How noble of her.

Vogl then turns her attention to the "Roman Exclusionists" with whom she finds little, if anything, positive to say. Here again, her objections are but shallow contra-arguments to two-millennia of Catholic doctrine, dogma,

Tradition, and liturgical practices. In short, she is repulsed by those who place God first, worship because God asks that of his children, believe what Jesus Christ taught and commanded of the Apostles and their successors, and who try to faithfully follow the rituals and teaching of the Catholic Church.

Roman Exclusionists, on the other hand, are very concerned about the rectitude of ritual. The infinitude of God does not cause them to praise diversity in humanity, but to emphasize shame and fear of our unworthiness in comparison. Their central concern is attaining to holiness by following very exactly the commands of God about liturgy and sin, as they perceive them. The liturgy of the Mass should be focused on signifying “reverence,” which they believe makes it more pleasing to God and more efficacious in bringing the worshiper to Heaven one day. The solution to sin is knowledge of the Catechism and recourse to the Sacrament of Confession. Reciting certain prayers is also sure to increase holiness. Those who don’t do these things, whether out of the darkness of ignorance or stubborn refusal to submit to the teachings of the Church, are almost surely damned because they do not perform the incantations necessary for salvation. Exclusionists see evangelization as telling people what formulas they should be following so that they can be saved. There is no point in listening to others because it is assumed the person outside the Church has nothing to offer but corruption.

Central to her contretemps, “The infinitude of God does not cause them to praise diversity in humanity, but to emphasize shame and fear of our unworthiness in comparison,” Vogl thus argues this:

“Roman Exclusionists” are guilty because they worship God and not humanity. The progressive dogma of diversity shall not be abridged! The Roman Exclusionists’ greatest sin: doing the will of the Father by observing and obeying His commandments; their greatest fault: humility before God, knowing their fallen nature, but with a sincere desire to please Him and show true reverence in His holy place.

Just a few more bits and pieces from Vogl’s commentary; her essay is quite lengthy and for the most part simply redundant, theologically heretical and offensive to God. His Church and to His holy people. Under the heading “Mystery vs. Magic” (one can easily guess the mysterious from the magician) she writes:

The faith of an Open Catholic claims to know and understand very little with certainty, beyond this central point of God’s incarnation out of love and the content of the Creeds. ... We believe there are realities beyond what can be observed with the senses or verified with science, but we don’t believe claims that directly contradict empirical evidence just because someone says they come from God.

Roman Exclusionists ask us to believe in magic: if the incantational formulas are followed, we can have certainty of consequences. If certain rules of marriage are followed, it will be unbreakable. When a priest is ordained, especially as a Bishop or Pope, he becomes an oracle wholly reliable to speak for God on all matters of faith and morals, at all times. ... If Baptism has been administered at any age, the person is responsible as having been given the gift of faith, and is apostate and condemned by God if they grow to doubt it. The Exclusionists tell us

that the Church’s formulas are unbending for our benefit, and any situational analysis or evolution according to changing circumstances is anathema “relativism.”

I shudder at the reading of such heresy; I fear for her soul and anyone who blindly accepts her swill as gospel. As Jesus said to the apostles,

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age (Mt 28:18-20).

Jesus, having every authority—as God—authorized and commissioned them to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, teaching them to observe and obey all his commandments. None were “ultimately optional.”

H. Lillian Vogl calls herself an Open Catholic, she is not; she claims to be a “Practicing Catholic,” she is not; she claims to be Catholic, she is not. One cannot claim title to a thing which is not rightfully theirs to claim. At best, she may lay claim to be a “Progressive humanist” in Catholic clothing; at worst, a devil in disguise.

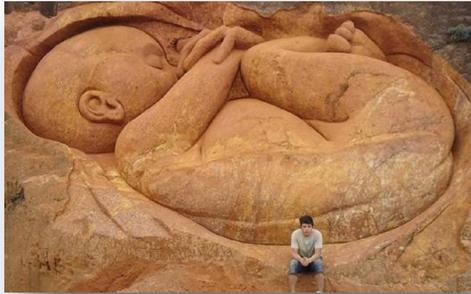
1. Joseph Pearce, “G. K. Chesterton and the Meaning of Progress”, National Catholic Register, Sept. 10, 2018.
2. Chesterton, G. K.. *Heretics: Illustrated Centennial Edition*, Chesterton Books, pp. 125-126.
3. Joseph Pearce, *G. K. Chesterton and the Meaning of Progress*.
4. Chesterton, G. K.. *Heretics: Illustrated Centennial Edition*, Chesterton Books, pp. 11-12.
5. H. Lillian Vogl, *Two Catholic Churches—I’m Staying With One*, Patheos:Catholic, Oct. 11, 2018. The full essay can be found at <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/suspendedinherjar/2018/10/two-catholic-churches/> (Read with all due caution and care.)

Pregnant Mountain

The woman that gives life

The image of a stunning sculpture carved on a mountain, portraying a baby inside his mother's womb went viral on social media a little more than three years ago. First reported by Sofia Vazquez-Mellado, Sep 29, 2015 from Bogata, Colombia, the sculpture, in the words of artist Dubian Monsalve, is a tribute to "the woman that gives life, because life is valuable from its conception to its end."

Monsalve completed his work in 2012, but it was only in 2015 that his sculpture became known when someone anonymously took a picture of it and uploaded it online.



The sculpture, titled "Pregnant Mountain," is located near the town of Santo Domingo, in Colombia, and has now become a tourist site.

The artist, who used rudimentary tools to complete his work, explained that doing so was a way to "tell them [farmers from the area] not to abandon their land and to not abandon their beliefs, not abandon their identity as Christians and as farmers who feed this country."

"Soil has been very important to me as a sculptor," he continued. "It contains many elements and I used it to talk about life, because Earth itself gives life."

"Do not be afraid," he said, referring to other artists who struggle to express their faith. "It is something Jesus taught us, we can't remain silent. I really enjoyed doing this piece because it encompasses a universal message about life, a message to protect life from its beginning until its end and it's not worth it to give up simply because of worldly prejudices and criticism."

Finally, he said that for him it was all about "strength, being brave and taking a chance on standing by your thoughts, your ideas, and being a Christian artist."

This month has been designated "Respect Life Month" which includes all life from the unborn to the very old, from the healthy to the infirm, the strong as well as the weak, the rich and the poor. As Dubian Monsalve noted, "because life is valuable from its conception to its end."

Let us pray to the God who loves all equally, that hearts that are hardened may be softened like melted butter, souls dark from the ravages of sin and hate receive the light of Christ and know the love of God once more.

Let us pray for those lives fell short by cruelty and viciousness, hatred and violence. May their souls and the souls of all the departed rest in peace.

Amen.

Deacon's Diner

Food for a restless mind

For those restless minds that hunger and thirst for more. Each week this space will offer a menu of interesting and provocative titles, written by Catholic authors, in addition to those referenced in the articles, for you to feed your restless mind.

BOOKS

Thoughtful Theism

Fr. Andrew Younan

Emmaus Road Publishing
2017, 200 pages.

Coming Soon

Michael Barber

Emmaus Road Publishing
2005, 326 pages.

Strangers in a Strange Land

Charles J. Chaput

Henry Holt and Co.
February 21, 2017, 288 pages.

PERIODICALS

First Things

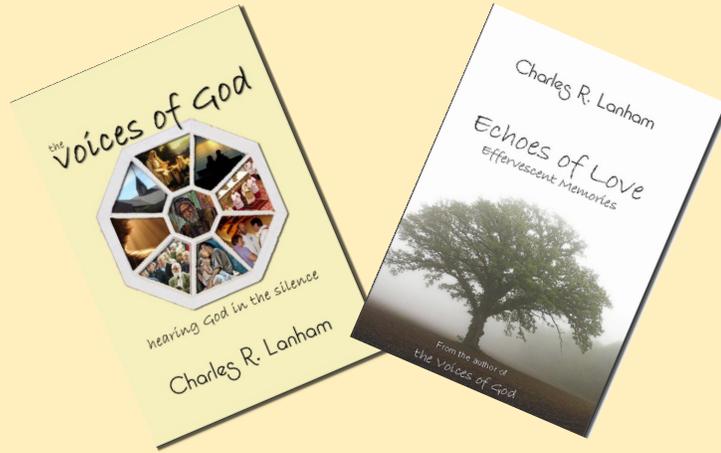
Institute on Religion and Public Life
Editor: R. R. Reno
Ten Issues per year.
www.firstthings.com

Touchstone

A Journal of Mere Christianity
Editor: James M. Kushiner
Bi-Monthly.
www.touchstonemag.com

Catholic Answers Magazine

Share the Faith, Defend the Faith
Editor: Tim Ryland
Bi-Monthly.
www.catholic.com



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Deacon Chuck Lanham is an author, columnist, speaker, and a servant of God.

He is the author of **The Voices of God: Hearing God in the Silence**, **Echoes of Love: Effervescent Memories** and is currently writing his third book **Without God: Finding God in a Godless World**.

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Deacon Chuck can be contacted thru email at

deacon.chuck@deaconscorner.org

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4742 Cougar Creek Trail

Reno, Nevada 89519